Panchayati Raj institutions and SHGs

*11. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are evolving a scheme, with co-operation of World Bank for federating self-help groups (SHGs) into Panchayati Raj institutions to organize women from poor and disadvantaged rural households to make them vibrant and self-sufficient;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether Government have developed any mechanism to periodically monitor working of Panchayati Raj outfits?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) At present, there is no such proposal under the consideration of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The first task before the Ministry was to evolve a national consensus in respect of the Roadmap for Panchayati Raj through mutual consultation between the Centre and the States. Ministry of Panchayati Raj convened Seven Round Tables of State Panchayati Raj Ministers with the Union Minister of Panchayati Raj between July and December 2004. The deliberations centered on the 18 identified dimensions of Panchayati Raj ranging from the effective Devolution of the Functions, Finances and Functionaries to District Planning, Training and Capacity Building and IT-enabled e-governance. At the conclusion of each Round Table, nearly 150 action points comprised in the Compendium were unanimously adopted by all Panchayati Raj Ministers and referred to Chief Ministers for their approval. This has become a National Roadmap for effective Panchayati Raj. Further, the Minister (Panchayati Raj) has visited 23 States and Union Territories and signed a joint declaration with the respective Chief Ministers of States setting forth the path to full empowerment of Panchayats.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj is continually interacting with the State Governments to ascertain the effectiveness of PRIs. A Committee of Panchayati Raj Secretaries was constituted to monitor the progress and implementation of these 150 Action Points. This Committee of Secretaries headed by the Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj would also service the Council of Panchayati Raj Ministers. The Committee of Secretaries has held nine meetings. The Council of Ministers has been convened thrice, at Kochi, Kerala in August 2005, at Bhubaneswar, Orissa in June 2006 and at Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala in August 2007, respectively. The Empowered Sub-Committee of National Development Council also reviews the progress of implementation of the provision of the Constitution during its meetings, which are held periodically. Most of these action points revolve around follow up measures on activity mapping, matching transfer of funds and functionaries, creation of Panchayat sector in the State budget, constitution and operational guidelines for the District Planning Committees within an agreed time-frame.

Improvement of delivery system

*12. SHRIMATI PREMA CARIAPPA:
SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are working fast to introduce a new technology driven integrated smart card system that would improve delivery systems and bridge the gap between target and achievements for various schemes;

(b) whether the World Bank's recent report "Doing Business in 2007" which points out that India stood at a low of 173 of the 175 countries has been studied under the parameter of executing contracts;

(c) whether Government have constituted a committee to find out ways to improve delivery system and have also received its recommendations; and

(d) if so, the steps taken to implement them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN): (a), (c) and (d) The Working Group on "Integrated Smart Card System" constituted by the Planning Commission in March, 2006 in its Report submitted in January, 2007 has, *inter alia*, recommended that the Government may initiate steps for the introduction of Integrated Smart Card System for the major entitlement schemes. The Report of the Working Group is under examination.

(b) Yes, Sir. As regards enforcing contracts, a Committee under the Chairmanship of Secretary, Department of Legal Affairs has been set up to examine the issue pertaining to enforcing contracts and recommend corrective measures.

Postal Life Insurance Scheme

*13. SHRI RAJ NATH SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the loss of faith of common people in the Postal Life Insurance Scheme due to non-settlement of death claims;

(b) whether Government have received representations/request for settlement of policy series DL-34825-CS;

(c) if so, the reasons for non-settlement of the claims;

(d) by when these claims are likely to be settled to restore investor faith; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) Death claims in respect of Postal Life Insurance Schemes are being settled timely as per rules.

(b) Yes. Department has received request for settlement in respect of this individual case.

(c) The case was rejected as the insurant had concealed vital information essentially required during the procurement of the Postal Life Insurance Policy. The claimant was informed accordingly.

(d) The case has already been decided as above on 13.8.2002 after detailed investigation into the cases.

(e) Does not arise in view of (c) and (d) above.

State Transport Ministers' Meet

*14. SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE:
SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:

Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state: